Theme 1.

Important common or desired elements for systems research program e.g Africa RISING, Simlesa

* 1. Multidisciplinary: five domains, experts on components (eg crops, animals) and experts on systems, and on social, gender aware

Does multidisciplinary mean mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative)

Action research approaches

* + 1. Representative (operationalized): AR and Simlesa have both
    2. Aspirational: would like more systems expertise and future foresight
  1. At multiple scales plot – farm- landscape (when appropriate)/ value chain
     1. Representative: yes, AR is including all three in some sites, Simlesa is more plot farm focused in phase 1 and 2, ambition to go to 3 landscape (when appropriate)
  2. SI practices or principles widely communicated
     1. Aspirational in both projects, we are on the way, highly desirable
  3. Monitoring systems and metrics to document progress along SI trajectories, metrics carefully selected to align with decision making criteria at each level (farmer has different decision making, researchers and policy maker)
     1. Representative in both projects
     2. Aspirational: aligning metrics with decision making criteria at multiple levels, extension and policy
     3. Quantification of benefits, e.g. labour saving, degradation. This requires careful identification of indicators to measure changes rigorously
     4. Documentation of the success and failures, for holistic lessons gathering, policy, etc.
  4. Adoptability, and potential impact, vision of success
     1. Representative in both projects lots of progress, esp SIMLESA, however also AR work in progress as well with SI framework
  5. Iterative learning and flexibility to support redesign as needed (when done?)

1.6.1 Representative in both projects, more documented in some AR projects

* 1. Beyond household benefits ecosystem services, equal attention to S and I
     1. Aspirational in both projects, spotty attention
  2. Look beyond crops and livestock, horticulture, focus on the integration and interaction
     1. Representative in both projects, especially in AR
  3. Systems boundaries and context, farming systems, future as well as todays (so need foresight)
     1. Aspirational in both projects
  4. Holistic approach, considering livelihoods and context, as well as understanding process
  5. Representative in terms of focus of many AR projects, SIMLESA less so
  6. Aspirational: very little social science representative, yet livelihoods requires this and policy maker communication, to operationalize for impact, how do we understand complexity, we are failing to communicate, and failure to focus and synthesize
  7. Also systems may need to better address the ‘wicked problem’ aspect, which is key to grapple with in systems research: the variation in uncertainty and value conflict communication complexity

(short list: residue management, soil quality rehabilitation)

* + 1. Aspirational for both projects also work in progress (current tasks)
  1. Systems research, efficiency, redesign (local adaptation, in a local context), Plausible options, context = performance - so some substitution – so need to grapple with failure and support local capacity building
     1. Aspirational except some examples within Africa RISING (see Irmgard/Peter talk today). Work in progress to document.
  2. Explicit attention to synthesis: Spend more money on analyses and synthesis, more than data collection. Big projects require more communication too, which requires indepth syntheses of the different disciplines incl. gender and environmental issues
     1. Aspirational, work in progress